

Received from David Nesmith, Environmental Water Caucus
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The Bay Delta Estuary Ecosystem Collapse & the South Delta Increased Pumping (SDIP)

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) is planning to increase pumping rates at the huge pumps that send water south to San Joaquin Valley agriculture and Southern California, in the face of a crashing delta ecosystem. Plans are to increase pumping maximums from 6680 cubic feet per second (cfs) to 8500cfs, an increase of 25%. In the past four years, four species of Delta fish have gone into severe decline, as are copepods, the important base of the Delta's complex food web.

Fisheries biologists point to three suspected causes of the Delta collapse. Degraded water quality, and exotic species and massive water diversions. The collapse of the Delta species over the last four years has in fact coincided with the highest annual rates of water diversions from the Bay-Delta. According to State and Federal fisheries documents, increasing diversions will make the ecosystem collapse even worse.

Even more disturbing is that this increased stress on the Delta is not necessary. California is not in a water crisis. In fact, according to the State's own California Water Plan Update Public Review Draft, California can meet water needs well into the future without taking more water out of the Bay-Delta Estuary. This Water Plan Update actually shows that water demand in California may actually decrease over the next thirty years.

Key elements of this water grab include actions by Federal and State water agencies which reduce protections and increase water volumes for pumping at the expense of California's sustainable water future:

- The National Marine Fisheries Service was pressured into reversing their scientific finding that this increased pumping would jeopardize salmon and steelhead trout. Even the watered down Biological Opinion stated that the project would increase the likelihood of extinction for all listed species on most rivers tributary to the Delta.
- The Federal Bureau of Reclamation will gut key protections currently in place to ensure that fish will have the cold water necessary for their survival (e.g. deleting the requirement that enough cold water be held in Shasta Reservoir for release to the Sacramento River and altering temperature control standards).
- Bureau of Reclamation rushed through forty year sweetheart contracts with Northern California districts for more water than they need so that those districts can sell the water to Southern California.
- State Water Project will increase export capacity by up to 25%. The California Department of Water Resources currently pushing to get approval to use its pumps to export as much as 1 million acre feet of this water.

- California Department of Water Resources connecting the State Water Project canal to the Bureau of Reclamation canal (the Delta Mendota Canal) so that DWR can pump more water for Bureau water contractors such as Westlands Water District.
- Physical barriers in the South Delta to somewhat reduce the impacts of the increased pumping on local farmers.

The Bay-Delta Estuary is the largest estuary on the west coast of the United States. This important ecological resource should not be destroyed.

What You Can Do:

We need you to write a letter to Governor Schwarzenegger.

Tell him it makes no sense to you that his Department is planning to increase pumping when the Delta is so stressed and so many species are in serious decline.

Tell him we have faster, better, cheaper ways to provide water for California's future. These are outlined clearly in the just released California Water Plan.

In fact, the Planning and Conservation League has identified 4.1 million acre feet of water that can be conserved using cheap and available conservation and reuse technologies, while this Delta Damaging Plan might provide only 1 million acre feet of additional water.

Tell him you want a sensible, defensible, sustainable water policy that conserves our resources and keeps our state beautiful vibrant and strong.

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger
State Capitol, Sacramento 95814